

(Washington, DC) Today, Congressman Alcee L. Hastings (D-Miramar) was joined by Representatives Howard L. Berman of California, John Lewis of Georgia, and Henry A. Waxman of California in hosting a breakfast for Black and Jewish Members of Congress to begin a dialogue on the history of Black and Jewish relations and develop plans for a better future. The Members were also joined by Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer, Israeli Ambassador to the United States Michael Oren, Rabbi Jack Moline of the Agudas Achim Congregation, Reverend Wallace Charles Smith of Shiloh Baptist Church, and Operation Understanding DC student leaders Chinyere Ukaegbu and Sam Edelman.

"History has not been gentle to either of our groups," **said Congressman Hastings**. "We shared the burden of hatred and yet we overcame."

"The African-American and Jewish communities were proud partners during the civil rights movement and have continued to work together to advance the cause of social justice," **said Democratic Whip Hoyer**

in his welcoming remarks. "I'm glad that black and Jewish Members of Congress could join to reflect on this shared history and help renew those ties of cooperation."

Following Congressman Hastings' and Democratic Whip Hoyer's opening remarks, blessings were offered by Rabbi Moline and Reverend Smith, who also shared brief words about their work in engaging and uniting the Black and Jewish communities. **Reverend Smith remarked** that it was "a blessing to see people of like minds around a table." Rabbi Moline spoke on the subject of 'Who's that man?'

"There is no person, no act, no kindness, no outreach that is superfluous, that is incidental," **said Rabbi Moline**.

"Each human being, each person in this room and beyond this room determines the course of history."

"The roots of the African-American and Jewish alliance are, like the River Jordan of song, wide and deep. They go back to the decades of partnership between African-American and Jewish activists in the struggle for equal rights in this country—a struggle in which Blacks and Jews gave their lives," **said Ambassador Oren**. "Israel, for its part, the Jewish state, is also a multi-racial, multi-ethnic state dedicated to the ideals embodied by Edward Wilmot Blyden,

Frederick Douglas, and Dr. Martin Luther King.”

“The history that binds African-American Members of Congress with Jewish Members of Congress runs deep,” **said Rep. Berman**. “Our struggles and triumphs serve as reminders that we must work together to ensure oppression and discrimination against any group will not be tolerated.”

“Black and Jewish people have reached beyond their differences in culture and religion to form important alliances which helped to break down the walls of hate in Germany and in America,” **said Rep. John Lewis**.

“That legacy has left this world a little more free from oppression and violence and just a little more enlightened and evolved.”

“The historic partnership between African-Americans and Jewish-Americans is alive and well today in Congress and communities around the country,” **Rep. Waxman added**. “Today’s discussion was not only one of remembrance and tribute, but also of new opportunities to face challenges together.”

Student leaders Chinyere Ukaegbu and Sam Edelman gave remarks regarding their experiences as graduates of the six month Operation Understanding DC program. Operation Understanding DC’s mission is to build a generation of African-American and Jewish community leaders who promote respect, understanding, and cooperation while working to eradicate racism, anti-Semitism, and all forms of discrimination.

“The history of oppression runs deep within our pasts,” **said Congressman Hastings**. “By coming together as we have this morning to share our experiences and ideas, and with the support of organizations such as Operation Understanding DC, we can work together for the betterment of all.

“As we begin our journey into the 21st century, we remember the troubled times of the past and the accomplishments that have brought us to where we are today,” **further noted Hastings**. “It is our job to stand guard and make sure the forces of oppression and discrimination never again take root in this country or around the world.”

Members In Attendance (32): Gary L. Ackerman (NY), Karen Bass (CA), Shelley Berkley (NV), Howard L. Berman (CA), Donna M. Christensen (VI), David N. Cicilline (RI), Hansen Clarke (MI), Steve Cohen (TN), Susan A. Davis (CA), Theodore E. Deutch (FL), Eliot L. Engel (NY), Marcia L. Fudge (OH), Alcee L. Hastings (FL), Steny H. Hoyer (MD), Sheila Jackson Lee (TX), Eddie Bernice Johnson (TX), Henry C. “Hank” Johnson, Jr. (GA), Barbara Lee (CA), Sander M. Levin (MI), John Lewis (GA), Nita Lowey (NY), Gregory W. Meeks (NY), Jerrold Nadler (NY), Jared Polis (CO), Charles B. Rangel (NY), Cedric L. Richmond (LA), Steven R. Rothman (NJ), Janice D. Schakowsky (IL), Debbie Wasserman Schultz (FL), Melvin L. Watt (NC), Henry A. Waxman (CA), and John A. Yarmuth (KY).

Congressman Alcee L. Hastings serves as Senior Member of the House Rules Committee, Ranking Democratic Member of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, and Democratic Chairman of the Florida Delegation.

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